

Alabama's Unemployment Rate Continues Dramatic Decline

MONTGOMERY— Governor Robert Bentley announced today that Alabama's December 2011 unemployment rate dropped again dramatically to 8.1%, down from 8.7% in November.

December's rate represents 174,119 unemployed persons, compared to 187,496 last month, and 193,158 in December 2010.

"Alabama's unemployment rate has been falling since August," said Governor Robert Bentley. "In the last three months alone, we've seen an unprecedented drop of 1.7 percentage points. Our rate is once again below the national average, and over 41,000 more Alabamians are employed now than at the beginning of the year. I have to say that 2011 turned out to be a pretty good year, in terms of reducing unemployment, but we still have work to do."

Alabama's unemployment rate matched the national rate (8.7%) in November 2011, and fell below in December (8.5%). Employment in January 2011 was 1,921,819, compared to December's employment of 1,963,395.

"There are many positive economic indicators that our economy is slowly improving," said Tom Surtees, Director of the Alabama Department of Industrial Relations. "Initial claims, first payments, benefit payments, and weeks claimed all remain at levels below the last three years."

- Initial claims were 22,632 in December 2011, compared to 33,949 in December 2010, 42,792 in December 2009, and 32,764 in December 2008.
- First payments were 9,936 in December 2011, compared to 11,602 in December 2010, 17,220 in December 2009, and 11,936 in December 2008.
- Benefit payments were \$27,227,279 in December 2011, compared to \$34,210,061 in December 2010, \$55,474,918 in December 2009, and \$47,717,545 in December 2008.
- Weeks claimed were 148,784 in December 2011, compared to 184,415 in December 2010, 251,942 in December 2009, and 280,733 in December 2008.

Since January 2011, Alabama gained 35,400 jobs. The majority of the gains came from the sectors of trade, transportation, and utilities; professional and business services; leisure and hospitality; and manufacturing. Declines were recorded in the government and information sectors.

The counties with the lowest unemployment rates in December were: Shelby County at 5.2%, Coffee County at 6.0%, Pike County at 6.4%, and Lee County at 6.4%. The counties with the highest unemployment rates in December were: Wilcox County at 16.3%, Bullock County at 13.7%, Perry County at 13.5%, and Lowndes County at 13.5%.

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For more information, contact the Governor's Press Office at 334-242-7150.